Unlocking Courage

Sacramento State Professor Michele Foss-Snowden was used to communication studies student Elaine Welteroth ’07 visiting her during office hours. But, on this day, Welteroth’s question took her aback.

“What can we do about this A-minus situation?” Welteroth said.

“Girl, that’s a great grade,” Foss-Snowden thought at the time.

But Welteroth was aiming higher and made a compelling argument—she walked out of Foss-Snowden’s office with an A.

“I knew then she had what it took,” Foss-Snowden said.

Welteroth’s quest for high marks at Sacramento State also opened up doors for opportunities that would ultimately lead to her current successful career. The opportunity was the chance for an automatic A and semester-long reprieve from attending class for any communications student who could get their byline in a national publication.

Welteroth, who also was a writer for the State Hornet student newspaper, took on the challenge and successfully pitched a 200-word “blurb about footwear” to Figure magazine. She then used the time gained from her release from class to continue writing for the publication.

“That opportunity was the beginning of my magazine career,” she said. “I really got addicted to that creative process. Coming up with that idea, pitching it, and then seeing it through to execution. I don’t know that I would’ve had that kind of discovery elsewhere.”

Since graduating from Sacramento State, Welteroth has gone on to have a distinguished career in print and television. At Teen Vogue Magazine, she broke new ground as the youngest and only the second Black editor in chief in Condé Nast history. She wrote a New York Times bestselling autobiography More Than Enough. She is also a champion of social justice and is both a co-host of “The Talk” and a judge on Bravo’s “Project Runway.”

Welteroth credits the Sacramento State faculty and a supportive campus environment for helping her discover this inner strength.

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Former Teen Vogue editor in chief, “Project Runway” judge, and “The Talk” co-host Elaine Welteroth with her bestselling memoir.

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The goal of the $225 million On the Rise campaign is to amplify Sacramento State’s impact in the region, the state, and the world by doubling our current level of private support. The campaign has three priorities: supporting students through increased financial aid and student programs; advancing knowledge through innovative learning approaches; and strengthening the larger Sacramento community through diverse, engaged, and impactful teaching and research.

On the Rise campaign is committed to uplifting generations of people in an equitable and sustainable way.

For more information about On the Rise, please contact the Campaign Office at campaign@csus.edu. Online: csus.edu/campaign